

Waste Reduction

This is _____.

“Here today, gone tomorrow,” a phrase that unfortunately doesn’t apply to a lot of the garbage we throw in the trash every day. What can we do to reduce all this waste that continues to pile up? We can practice the three R’s of waste reduction, reduce, reuse, and recycle.

- Reduce waste by purchasing items that use less packaging. To reduce packaging, buy items that you use frequently in bulk, and look for items that are sold in reusable or recycled containers.
- Reuse items whenever possible. Use travel mugs versus disposable coffee mugs, repair broken items when possible, and donate materials you no longer want to a local charity or church group.
- Recycle items such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles, newspaper, white paper, junk mail, and cardboard.

In addition to the three R’s, we can also precycle. Precycle reduces waste by avoiding items that will create waste. Precycle basically means to think before you buy. You can precycle by:

- Taking your own reusable bags for shopping.
- Avoid purchasing items that can only be used once or for a limited time, such as throwaway cleansing pads, non-refillable pens, and foil baking pans.
- Beware of the word recyclable. It’s not the same as recycled. Many materials are recyclable in theory, what is important is that that materials can be recycled in a local recycling program.

For more information contact your local Extension office or solid waste coordinator.

Prepared by Ashley Osborne, Extension Associate for Environmental and Natural Resource Issues, 2008.